



The Messenger

February 2024 Edition

A Monthly Newsletter from St. John Lutheran Church and School

Inside this Issue...

Devotional Corner	page 2
Today's Christian Parenting	page 3
Events	page 4
Church Highlights	page 5
School Highlights	page 5
Apple Valley Food Pantry News	page 6
Contact Information	page 6

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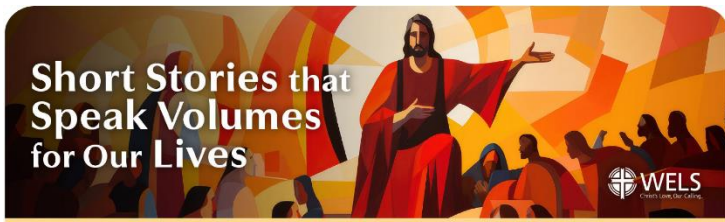


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Gather. Grow. Go. To the Glory of God!



Devotional Corner: A Father's Love

Jesus said, "The son got up and went to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him." Luke 15:20

He was homeless, smelly, and almost starving to death. But the worst thing was that he knew it was all his fault. He thought his father was cruel and overbearing; there were too many rules. He wanted freedom. He wanted to have fun, but his father was all about responsibility and hard work. So, he asked for his share of the inheritance. He didn't care about the farm; he just wanted the money. As soon as he got it, he left. He could finally do what he wanted to do. But it didn't take long, and all that money was gone—partying is expensive. Those he thought were his friends left as soon as he ran out of money. He was all alone and miserable. He had two choices, and neither seemed pleasant. He could continue as he was and hope he could scrape enough together each day so that he wouldn't starve to death, or he could go back home.

He headed for home. He was prepared to grovel, to ask to be just a hired hand on his father's farm. But he didn't get the opportunity to do much groveling. As soon as his father saw him coming, he ran out to meet him. He hugged and kissed him and gave orders for a huge celebration in his honor. The rebellious son had expected a cool reception. He had expected an "I told

you so." Instead, he got what he knew he didn't deserve: a joyous welcome home.

You and I are that young man who rebelled against his father. We've all rebelled against our heavenly Father. We've considered him to be cruel and overbearing and having too many rules—someone who doesn't want us to have any fun. We've all separated ourselves from him and broken his commandments. Our consciences tell us that he's angry, that we deserve whatever pain or suffering comes our way. Could our heavenly Father still love us? Could he still welcome us to his eternal home in heaven?

Jesus' story about the disobedient son in Luke 15:11-24 is a short story that speaks volumes for our lives. It assures us of God's love and our heavenly home. Our heavenly Father loves us so much that he punished his obedient Son, Jesus, in our place so that he can welcome us as his dear children and heirs of eternal life. Instead of giving us what we deserve for our rebelliousness, he gives us what we don't deserve: complete forgiveness in Jesus.

We welcome you to gather with us for worship and learn more about our heavenly Father's love.

In Christ's Service & Yours!
Pastor Mike Gehl



Worship With Us!

Sundays at 8:00 and 10:30am

Thursdays at 6:30 pm (Switches to Wednesdays during Lent)

Bible Classes and Sunday School Sundays at 9:15 am

Christian Parenting Today



Christian Parenting Today: What Do Your Prayers for Your Children Include?

Excerpts from a Forward in Christ article

“Let them be okay!” “Please help them sleep!” “Let her make these free throws!” Let’s be honest. Some parental prayers come from panic, stress, and fear. When I’m more deliberate, I’ve noticed that prayers for my children fit into two broad categories: what they do and who they are.

What they do. These prayers, which obviously change throughout the years, focus on whatever issues the kids are facing. My current prayers for my young adults tend to be about school, friendships, their future paths, careers, safe travel. (Safe travel comes up a lot!) Sometimes I also pray for just the right amount of struggle, because I realize that a completely easy life doesn’t help them become responsible adults.

Who they are. While “what” prayers are good, I want to spend more time on prayers about their faith and character. That’s why I made a list of 31 qualities I want God to develop in them, so their lives bring him glory. Each day of the month, I focus on one. Some are about love for God, his Word, and others. I want my children to be humble, joyful, faith full, generous, grateful, courageous, content. I pray the Holy Spirit would help them seek justice, control their tongues, persevere, stand up against temptation, respect authority, accept correction, choose friends wisely, and pray always.

One last thing . . . even as we are busy praying for our children, let’s not forget to pray with them. As we hold their hands in the car on the way to school or in their room before they go to sleep, we are teaching them to carry all things—their fears, joys, hurts, happiness—to the heavenly Father who loves them even more than we ever will.

-Linda Buxa

Over the years, I think my prayers for my children have gotten simpler. The prayer Jesus gave us is just so rich that it’s been a perfect fit as I prayed while rocking my children in the middle of the night or as we wait in the drop-off line in front of the middle school. At Christ’s invitation, we ask our Father:

Hallowed be your name: Keep my children’s relationship with you the most precious thing in their lives, dear Father.

Your kingdom come: Every day strengthen and uphold my children’s faith and guide them as they live it.

Your will be done: Stop those who would hurt my children. Strike their own sinful natures too.

Give us today our daily bread: Watch over my children’s well-being. By the way you provide for them, show them every day that they can trust you.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us: Keep my children in grace—acknowledging their sins and your forgiveness for them, living with that same forgiveness for others.

Lead us not into temptation: Bless them with a loving church family and good friends who don’t seek to pull them from you.

Deliver us from evil: Use everything in life to be a blessing to them, so that one day they might die in the faith of their baptism and live with you forever.

Other prayers come and go along with those petitions. I often find myself praying less that my children will be “happy” and more that they’ll have joy and meaning. I pray often for their future relationships—that what they’ve seen in our home life gives them optimism and desire for marriage and children as great gifts from God and that God guards and prepares their future spouses. I pray that their bodies and minds are kept safe at school. And I pray that no matter what should come, the Lord fills their hearts with hymns of joy and trust; that the little ones who sang hymns with my wife and me in bedtime prayers would have lives of singing hymns loudly in church, confidently at our funerals, and joyfully when we stand together in heaven.

-Joel Seifert

For the complete article, including an additional section by Brenda Wagenknecht, visit forwardinchrist.net/praying-for-our-children/

Upcoming Events

Bilingual Ash Wednesday Celebration with Ashes- Wednesday, February 14th

Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day coincide this year, a fitting coincidence as we begin the season of Lent looking ahead to Jesus' sacrifice of love for us. St. John will celebrate this year with a single bilingual service at 6:30 pm. Ash Wednesday (Miércoles de ceniza), like the previously celebrated Epiphany (Dia de Reyes), is an important date in Hispanic culture and provides another opportunity to welcome local Spanish-speaking families into our church. The imposition of ashes, a traditional sign of repentance, will be included in this year's service. Please reach out to Pastor Gehl if you have any questions about the ashes or if you would like to be involved in our Hispanic outreach.



FVL's MusicFest 2024- Sunday, February 4th

Fox Valley Lutheran High School is once again gearing up to celebrate its students' musical talents. Join us on Sunday, February 4th from 1:00- 4:30 pm to hear from the various choirs and bands at FVL. The celebration will also include many homemade goodies and time for fellowship. Then complete the afternoon by observing the 5:00 groundbreaking ceremony for FVL's new Timothy Trout Sports Center!



WineAlot Vineyards Gathering- Thursday, February 22nd

Church and school adults are invited to gather at WineAlot Vineyards on Thursday, February 22nd and take a break from the winter doldrums. Come from 5:00-8:00 and enjoy your favorite beverage while listening to live music by Kickback Trio, a 70s and 80s cover band. A variety of wines, beers, sodas, pizzas, paninis, and other munchies will be available. There is no cover charge and no need to register—just grab your friends and come by as you are able! WineAlot Wine Pub and Vineyards is located at 6123 County Trunk PP in Greenleaf.



Mark Your Calendars!

- February 1- School Choice Window Opens
- February 2- Pastor Play Day with EC Classes
- February 3- Praise Him Concert at St. Paul Appleton
- February 4- Musicfest at FVL
Groundbreaking for FVL Sports Complex
- February 8-9- No School (Teacher's Conference)
- February 13- Fellowship Luncheon
- February 14- Valentine's Day Class Celebrations
Bilingual Ash Wednesday Service with
Imposition of Ashes
- February 22- Adult Gathering at WineAlot Vineyards
- February 23- Hot Lunch
- February 24- FVL Dance Camp
- March 1-3- FVL Spring Musical (Mary Poppins) and
Art Show
- March 4-8- Spring Break
- March 4- FVL Open House

Church Highlights

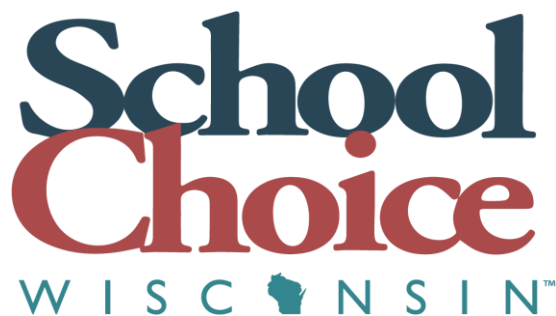


Lenten Service Schedule Change

St. John will be holding weekly Lenten services on Wednesday evenings beginning February 14th (Ash Wednesday) and running until Holy Week. With this addition, we will temporarily forego the typical Thursday night worship. Please note this schedule change so that you do not miss an opportunity for worship.

We consider the season of Lent to be important because it provides the opportunity to focus attention on the redeeming work of Jesus Christ. Jesus saved us by being our perfect substitute in life and our innocent substitute in death. Lent furnishes opportunities to marvel at the forgiving, sacrificial love of God. The emphasis of Lent is not what we might give up for God; the emphasis is on what God gave up for us: his only begotten Son.

School Highlights



School Choice Window Opens

The window for applying/reapplying for school choice is now open! From February 1st-April 18th, applications may be submitted to receive tuition payments from the state through the Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP/School Choice). It is open to any family with students entering preK, Kindergarten, first grade, or ninth grade or those who are transferring from a public school to a private choice school.

Anyone who is interested in using the school choice program to fund their tuition at St. John is highly encouraged to meet with Mrs. Starry and/or Mr. Raddatz. They can assist with the application process to ensure that you have completed everything correctly. Please remember that even those already enrolled in school choice must reapply annually.

Church Birthdays

Happy birthday to our members celebrating in February!

Feb 1 Lauryn Ripp	Feb 13 Oliver Heimmermann
Feb 2 Arlene Oakley	19 Jean Brandt
Feb 3 Mike Geiger	Feb 19 Debbie Propson
Feb 4 Niki Cappelle	Feb 20 Jamie Hein
Feb 4 Bart Reschke	Feb 22 Pat Vickman
Feb 4 Courtney Schisel	Feb 25 Alvin Petersen
Feb 4 Tom Toseland	Feb 27 Cory Uecker
Feb 5 Eric Beard	Feb 28 Waylon Bauer
Feb 7 Wesley Laabs	Feb 28 Jon Fehlauer
Feb 7 Jeremy Uecker	Feb 28 Reggie Pohlman
Feb 8 Abigail Raddatz	Feb 29 Betty Kussow
Feb 8 Tyler Vande Hey	Feb 29 Ryan Lemke
Feb 12 Alexa Leick	Feb 29 Richard Patton
Feb 12 Reece Schisel	



School Birthdays

Happy birthday to our students celebrating during February!

Loretta B.- February 1 st
Lauren R.- February 1 st
Theo V.- February 1 st
Loki S.- February 3 rd
Jackson Z.- February 3 rd
Griffin T.- February 12 th
Oliver H.- February 13 th
Gavin F.- February 22 nd
Cory U.- February 27 th

Apple Valley Food Pantry

The WELS Apple Valley Food Pantry (an outreach of WELS United congregations) gathers, stores and distributes food to area families in need of assistance through referrals from Fox Valley WELS pastors. For more information, visit AVFP at applevalleyfoodpantry@gmail.com or welsunited.org/programs/apple-valley-food-pantry.php.

2023 Highlights

- 63 families served monthly
- 1602 bags of non-perishable groceries distributed
- 645 bags of health and sundry needs distributed
- Nearly 31,000 lbs (15.5 tons) of goods processed
- \$23,000 of Scrip cards given out for fresh meat and produce needs
- 23 local WELS congregations contributed
- 70 volunteers assisted



February 2024 Needs

- adult cereals
- pork n beans
- baked beans
- pancake mix and syrup
- canned pasta
- potato side dishes (bagged and boxed)
- cookies
- crackers of all kinds
- shampoo
- conditioner
- men's and women's body washes

Contact Us

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Pastor Mike Gehl	920-309-5171	pastorgehl@gmail.com
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Dillon Solomon, 6th-8th grade teacher	248-525-3700	dillon.solomon@stjohnwrightstown.com
Rebecca Wicks, 2nd-3rd grade teacher	920-809-8648	rebecca.wicks@stjohnwrightstown.com
Jamie Buss, early childhood director and K-1st grade teacher	920-538-0470	jamie.buss@stjohnwrightstown.com
Leah Gamboa, preK teacher	920-309-5037	leah.gamboa@stjohnwrightstown.com
Madie Otto, preschool teacher	920-629-1220	madie.otto@stjohnwrightstown.com

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